

THE AMERICAN HERITAGE
DICTIONARY
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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aberrant. 3. *Mathematics*. Having no fixed quantitative value. —*n. Abbr. var.* 1. Anything that varies or is prone to variation. 2. *Astronomy*. A variable star. 3. *Mathematics*. a. A quantity capable of assuming any of a set of values. b. A symbol representing such a quantity. —*var'i-a-bil'i-ty, var'i-a-ble-ness n.* —*var'i-a-bly adv.*

variable cost. Cost that fluctuates directly with output changes.

variable star. A star whose brightness varies because of internal changes or periodic eclipsing of component stars.

Var-i-an (vâr'ē-an), Russell Harrison. 1898–1959. American physicist; with his brother, Sigurd (1901–1961), invented the klystron.

var-i-ance (vâr'ē-ans) n. 1. a. The act of varying. b. The state or quality of being variant or variable; variation; difference. c. A difference between what is expected and what actually occurs. 2. A difference of opinion; dissension; a dispute. 3. *Law*. a. A discrepancy between two statements or documents in a legal proceeding. b. The license to engage in an act contrary to a usual rule. 4. *Statistics*. The mean of the squares of the variations from the mean of a frequency distribution. 5. *Chemistry*. The number of thermodynamic variables required to specify a state of equilibrium of a system, given by the phase rule. —*See* Synonyms at discord. —*at variance*. 1. In a state of discrepancy; differing; conflicting. Said of things: *The facts are at variance.* 2. In a state of discord or dissension; quarreling. Said of persons: *Two factions of the party are at variance.*

var-i-ant (vâr'ē-ant) adj. Abbr. var. 1. Having or exhibiting variation; differing. 2. Tending or liable to vary; variable; changeable. 3. Deviating from a standard; exhibiting slight difference. —*n.* Something that differs only slightly from another in form, as a different spelling or pronunciation of the same word. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *variāns*, present participle of *variāre*, *VAR-*]

var-i-ate (vâr'ē-it, -āt) n. 1. Something that varies; a variable. 2. *Statistics*. A random variable with a numerical value that is defined on a given sample space. [From Latin *variāre*, *VAR-*] **var-i-a-tion (vâr'ē-ā-shən) n. Abbr. var.** 1. a. The act, process, or result of varying; change or deviation. b. The state or fact of being varied. 2. The extent or degree of such deviation: *a variation of ten pounds in weight.* 3. A natural compass error, magnetic declination (see). 4. Something that is slightly different from another of the same type. 6. *Biology*. Marked difference or deviation from characteristic form, function, or structure. 6. *Mathematics*. A function that relates the values of one variable to those of other variables. 7. a. A musical form that is an altered version of some given theme, diverging from it by melodic ornamentation and by changes in harmony, rhythm, or key. b. One of a series of such forms based on a single theme. 8. *Ballet*. A solo dance, especially one forming part of a larger work. —*See* Synonyms at difference. —*var-i-a-tion-al adj.*

var-i-cel-la (vâr'ē-sē-lā) n. Chicken pox (see). [New Latin, irregular diminutive of *VARICOLA*.] —*var-i-cel'loid adj.*

var-i-ces. Plural of *varix*.

varico-, varic-. Indicates varix or varicose veins; for example, *varicocele*, *varicosis*. [From Latin *varix* (stem *varic-*), *VARIX*.] **var-i-co-cele (vâr'ē-kō-sē-lē) n.** A varicose condition of veins of the spermatic cord or the ovaries, forming a soft tumor. [VARICO- + *-CELE* (tumor).]

var-i-col-ored (vâr'ē-kōl'ord) adj. Having a variety of colors; variegated; motley.

var-i-cose (vâr'ē-kōs) adj. 1. Designating blood or lymph vessels that are abnormally dilated, knotted, and tortuous. 2. Causing unusual swelling. [Latin *varicōsus*, from *varix*, *VARIX*.]

var-i-co-sis (vâr'ē-kō'sis) n. The state of being varicose. [VARICO- + *-OSIS*.]

var-i-cos-i-ty (vâr'ē-kōs'ē-tē) n., pl. -ties. 1. Varicosis. 2. a. A varicose distention or swelling. b. The state of having varicose veins.

var-i-cot-o-my (vâr'ē-kōt'ō-mē) n., pl. -mies. Subcutaneous incision to cure varicose veins. [VARICO- + *-TOMY*.]

var-led (vâr'ēd) adj. 1. Having various kinds or forms; marked by variety. 2. Modified or altered. 3. Varicolored; variegated. —*See* Synonyms at miscellaneous. —*var-led-ly adv.*

varied thrush. A bird, *Ixoreus naevius*, of western North America, resembling the robin but having a black transverse stripe on the breast.

var-i-o-gate (vâr'ē-ō-gāt) tr.v. -gated, -gating, -gates. 1. To change the appearance of, especially by marking with different colors; to streak. 2. To give variety to; make varied. [Late Latin *variēgāre*, from Latin *variū*, *VARIOUS*.]

var-i-o-gat-ed (vâr'ē-ō-gāt'ed) adj. 1. Having streaks, marks, or patches of a different color or colors. 2. Distinguished or characterized by variety; diversified.

var-i-o-ga-tion (vâr'ē-ō-gā'shən) n. The state of being variegated; diversified coloration.

var-i-o-tal (vâr'ē-ō-tal) adj. Of, indicating, or named for a biological variety. [From *VARIETY*.] —*var-i-o-tal-ly adv.*

var-i-o-ty (vâr'ē-ō-tē) n., pl. -ties. Abbr. var. 1. The condition or quality of being various or varied; a lack of monotony; diversity. 2. A number or collection of varied things, especially of a particular group; an assortment: "*Here are also a great variety of birds throughout the seasons, inhabiting both sea and land*" (William Bartram). 3. A different kind, sort, or form of something of the same general classification. 4. *Biology*. a. A taxonomic category forming a subdivision of a species and consisting of naturally occurring or selectively bred individuals

having varying characteristics. b. An organism, especially a plant, belonging to such a category. [Old French *variete*, from Latin *variētās*, from *variū*, *VARIOUS*.]

variety meat. Meat taken from a part other than skeletal muscles, as liver or sweetbreads, or processed, as sausage.

variety show. A theatrical entertainment consisting of successive unrelated acts, such as songs, dances, and comedy skits.

variety store. A retail store carrying a large variety of usually low-cost merchandise. Also called "variety shop."

var-i-form (vâr'ē-fōrm') adj. Having a variety of forms; diversified. [VARIO- + *-FORM*.]

vario-, vari-. Indicates variety or difference; for example, *variometer*, *variform*. [From Latin *variū*, *VARIOUS*.]

va-ri-o-la (vâr'ē-ō-lā) n. Smallpox. [New Latin, from Medieval Latin, pustule, from Latin *variū*, speckled, *VARIOUS*.]

var-i-o-late (vâr'ē-ō-lāt', -līt) adj. Having pustules or marks like those of smallpox. —*tr.v. variolated, -lating, -lates.* To inoculate with smallpox.

var-i-o-lite (vâr'ē-ō-līt') n. A basic rock with a pock-marked appearance due to numerous white, rounded spherules embedded in it. [Medieval Latin *variola*, smallpox, *VARIOLO* + *-ITE*.]

var-i-o-loid (vâr'ē-ō-loid') n. A mild form of smallpox in persons who have previously been vaccinated or who have previously had the disease. [VARIOLO- + *-OID*.]

var-i-om-e-ter (vâr'ē-ōm'ē-tēr) n. A variable inductor used to measure variations in terrestrial magnetism. [VARIO- + *-METER*.]

var-i-o-rum (vâr'ē-ōr'um, -ōr'um) n. 1. An edition particularly of the complete works of a classical author, with notes by various scholars or editors. 2. An edition containing various versions of a text. —*adj.* Designating or pertaining to such an edition or text. [Short for Latin *editio cum notis variōrum*, edition with the notes of various (commentators), from *variōrum*, genitive plural of *variū*, *VARIOUS*.]

var-i-ous (vâr'ē-ōs) adj. Abbr. var. 1. a. Of diverse kinds. b. Unlike; different. 2. More than one; numerous; several. 3. Many-sided; varying; versatile. 4. Having a variegated nature or appearance. 5. Being one of a class or group; individual and separate: *The various reports all agreed.* 6. *Archaic*. Changeable; variable. [Latin *variū*, speckled, variegated, changeable. *See* *wā-* in Appendix.*] —*var-i-ous-ly adv.* —*var-i-ous-ness n.*

Usage: *Various* sometimes appears as a plural collective pronoun followed by *of* rather than by a noun, but the usage is widely condemned: *He spoke to various of the members (or spoke to various of them).* The preceding example is termed unacceptable by 91 per cent of the Usage Panel. *Various* has its proper function as an adjective in *He spoke to various members.*

var-i-sized (vâr'ē-sīzd) adj. Of different sizes.

Var-i-ty-p-er (vâr'ē-tī-pēr) n. A trademark for a typewriter used to prepare copy in a variety of type styles.

var-ix (vâr'iks) n., pl. -ices (-ē-sēz'). 1. A vein, artery, or lymph vessel that is abnormally dilated and twisted. 2. One of the longitudinal ridges marking a resting stage in the development of the lip of a gastropod shell. [Latin, swollen vein. *See* *wā-* in Appendix.*]

var-let (vâr'lit) n. Archaic. 1. An attendant or servant. 2. A knight's page. 3. A rascal; knave. [Middle English, from Old French, variant of *vaslet*, *valet*, *VALET*.]

var-let-ry (vâr'lit-rē) n. Archaic. A crowd of attendants or menials, especially when disorderly; the rabble.

var-mint (vâr'mənt) n. Regional. A person or animal considered undesirable, obnoxious, or troublesome. [Variant of *VERMIN*.]

Var-na (vâr'nā). Formerly *Sta-lin* (stā'lin). A city of eastern Bulgaria, a port on the Black Sea. Population, 201,000.

var-nish (vâr'nish) n. 1. An oil-based paint containing a solvent and an oxidizing or an evaporating binder, used to coat a surface with a hard, glossy, thin film. 2. a. The smooth coating or gloss resulting from the application of varnish. b. Something resembling or likened to varnish. 3. Any deceptively attractive external appearance; an outward show. —*tr.v. varnished, -nishes, -nishes.* 1. To cover with varnish. 2. To give a smooth and glossy finish to. 3. To give a deceptively nice appearance to; gloss over. [Middle English *vernish*, from Old French *vernis*, from Medieval Latin *veronix*, sandarac, from Medieval Greek *berenikē*, perhaps from Greek *Berenikē*, Berenice, city in Cyrenaica, Libya, where varnishes were first used.]

—*var'nish-er n.*

varnish tree. Any of several trees having milky juice used to make varnish.

Var-ro (vâr'ō), Marcus Terentius. 116–27 B.C. Roman scholar and encyclopedist.

var-si-ty (vâr'sē-tē) n., pl. -ties. 1. The principal team representing a university, college, or school in sports or other competitions. 2. *Chiefly British Informal.* A university. [Shortened and altered from *UNIVERSITY*.] —*var'si-ty adj.*

Var-u-na (vâr'ōō-nā, vūr'-). Hinduism. The Vedic god of the skies and seas. [Sanskrit *Varuna*. *See* *wā-* in Appendix.*]

var-us (vâr'us) n., pl. -uses. An abnormal positioning of a bone of the leg or foot. [From Latin *vārus*, crooked, bent inward. *See* *wā-* in Appendix.*]

varve (vâr)v. n. Geology. 1. A layer of sediment deposited in one year. 2. A pair of distinct layers of sediment, indicating seasonal deposits. [Swedish *varv*, layer, turn, from *varva*, to bend, turn, from Old Norse *hverfa*. *See* *kwēp-* in Appendix.*]

var-y (vâr'ē) v. -ied, -ying, -ies. -tr. 1. To make or cause changes in characteristics or attributes; modify or alter. 2. To make varied; give variety to: "*Using the preceding recipe, you may vary the sauce in a number of ways*" (Julia Child). 3. To introduce under new aspects; express in a different manner.

t tight/th thin, path/th this, bathe/ū cut/ūr urge/ valve/w with/y yes/z zebra, size/zh vision/ō about, item, edible, gallop, circus/ ā Fr. ami/œ Fr. feu, Ger. schön/ū Fr. tu, Ger. über/KH Ger. ich, Scot. loch/N Fr. bon. *Follows main vocabulary. †Of obscure origin.